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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study of the factors that motivate researchers toward particular topics as well as the obstacles that may keep them from pursuing these topics with passion and empathy. Interviews were conducted with 47 faulty members at 2 California research universities, 1 public and 1 private. In keeping with the grounded theory approach, an iterative process was used for data analysis. Although this was not intended to be a study of emotions in academic work, the open-ended protocol ensured that issues salient to the respondents would emerge. The passions and personal connections that motivated these educational researchers were unmistakable. Strong drives for social or educational change were tempered, however, by circumstance and process, especially the pressures of working in an organization in which individuals are expected to work toward promotion and tenure. The tenure process emerged as the strongest indicator of whether these researchers experienced constraints as they set their research agendas. Assistant and associate professors were more likely to think of their work with passion and resolve. The data reveal the complex way in which motivations and constraints interact as new faculty find their place in the academy. (Contains 54 references.) (SLD)

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With Passion and Hope: The Delicate Bond between Research and Researcher

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> Many politicians lay it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free until they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim.
> -- Thomas Babington Macaulay, poet and politician

Introduction

In 1938, Virginia Woolf argued for a university in which "mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life" (p. 34). Thirty-five years later, Adrienne Rich (1979) urged us to "shift the center of gravity" in universities so that women could be "free to learn, to teach, to share strength, to explore, to criticize, and to convert knowledge to power" (p. 128). More recently, William Tierney (1993) has argued for a university where we understand "one another's pain and one another's views of the world and community" (p. 158).

What these proposals all share is their understanding of our need to connect as human beings. They define us not simply as researchers or as scholars, but as whole creatures, comprised of mind and body, reason and emotion. While this idea is not new, few larger institutions of higher education have had significant success in helping scholars remain connected to the emotional side of academic life. Procedural constraints, promotion and tenure reviews, and financial considerations all contribute to an environment where faculty are often forced to consider process over passion. In the end, researchers frequently lose their emotional connection to their work, as they struggle to gain or maintain secure employment in the academy.

This research paper describes the findings of one study that reveals the factors that motivate researchers toward particular topics and areas of study as well as the obstacles that may keep them from pursuing these topics with strong passion and empathy. In short, the paper highlights the difficulties inherent in creating a university environment that allows researchers to stay emotionally connected to their research. The paper goes beyond simply reporting these troubling findings, however, and offers suggestions for ways in which universities might address this issue at a policy level.

Emotion in Academic Life: A Review of Relevant Literature

There is a limited yet useful body of research focused on the question of emotion in academic thinking. In most cases, the work that does exist highlights the problematic relationship between emotion and "rational thinking." Laslett (1990), for instance, argues that "a negative association between science and emotion is part of the rhetoric of science" (p. 414). She notes that scientists have traditionally sought to cast their work as non-emotional in order to qualify it as legitimate. Similarly, the "charge of emotionalism" (p. 414) has been used throughout the scientific community to criticize or dismiss claims that are incongruous with or contradictory to established ways of thinking.

In recent decades, the often hierarchical distinction between reason and emotion has been interrogated and reconsidered (e.g., Dewhurst, 1997; Midgley, 1981; Scheffler, 1991). Laslett argues, for example, that emotion does in fact have an important role to play in scientific thinking. Specifically, academic interests comprise both cognition and emotion, and an emotional connection to a topic or area is precisely what makes it interesting and even important. Researchers in other fields have echoed this notion as well. For instance, Damasio (1994), in a widely read discussion of reason and emotion, argues from a neurobiological perspective that the two are inseparable – neither can exist without the other.

In a similar vein, Boler (1997) makes a case that the very distinction between reason and emotion is hierarchical – that any evidence of emotion in thinking is necessarily at the expense of what is typically perceived as more worthwhile and valuable rational thought. Through an examination of representative essays in the journal Educational Theory, she identifies five primary discourses of emotion in Western thought.

The first of these discourses, **rational**, is perhaps the best represented in academia. Here, as Boler points out, "Emotions are permitted or legitimate, for example, when channeled into rational debate: we speak of 'passionate' or 'heated' debate; the speaker who 'felt strongly' about his position and so forth" (p. 205). One can easily picture a respected academic delivering an impassioned conference paper. The emphasis, in such an example, is on a clear, rational speech merely peppered with emotional flavor.

In sharp contrast, the **pathological** discourse (the second in Boler's typology) reveals instances where we are seen as controlled by and at the mercy of our emotions ("I am sick with grief," for example). Here, the actor is subordinate to his or her feelings and lacks the control and

strength for reasoned, careful thought. As such, pathological emotion is almost always seen in a negative light.

The third discourse – **romantic** – represents a more heart-bound understanding of emotion; the ideas of caring, nurturing, and even pain are found in this way of understanding the role of emotion in our work. According to Boler, the passionate artist or religious zealot, for example, motivated almost exclusively by strong beliefs, would be characterized by romantic emotion.

Finally, a **political** discourse encompasses a very active stance toward the role of emotion in academic life. Metaphors of liberation, freedom and resistance are all associated with this discourse. Again, the actor is motivated largely – if not exclusively – by emotion, but with an eye toward change (versus the more straightforward expression found in romantic emotion).

These four discourses are particularly useful in understanding the motivations and choices of educational researchers. As will be argued through the data, current policies and practices sideline romantic and political understandings of emotion in favor of constrained rational understandings. Researchers are expected to present (in some cases, forced to present) their work in ways that limit emotional expression and favor positivistic, rational thinking. Unfortunately, emotional motivations that have the potential to allow researchers to maintain strong connections to their work may be diminished or even extinguished (particularly for faculty who lack power or autonomy), as faculty turn their attention to procedures and processes requiring practical, rational though. In extreme cases, emotional connections may be cast as pathological (i.e., uncontrolled and essentially useless). Indeed, Campbell (1994) uses the example of bitterness to make this very point:

> The criticism of bitterness is most powerful against people whose resources for expressing anger are limited to recounting injury in the hope that others will listen, people who are not in a position to influence politicians, bring lawsuits, make threats, or otherwise express anger irresistibly. The criticism works to maintain this impoverishment of resources because once a group is dismissed as bitter, others feel under little obligation to work for their empowerment (p. 53).

Faculty autonomy and academic freedom become central to this discussion as we seek to understand the ways in which educational researchers maintain (or fail to maintain) emotional connections to their work. Close to two decades ago, Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) conducted a quantitative study to reveal the internal and external forces that impact academic careers. Their

work revealed a steady decline in enthusiasm for research and teaching over the course of an academic career. Unfortunately, because of the quantitative nature of the study, they were not able to provide an explanation for this disturbing trend.

The work of Corcoran and Clark (1984) fills this void to some extent, highlighting the importance of quality mentoring and sponsorship to a successful academic career. Kirk and Todd-Mancillas (1991) echo the importance of collegial support to graduate students if they are to successfully complete their programs. Because neither study looks closely at what "successful" or "quality" mentoring actually comprises, their usefulness vis-à-vis the topic at hand is limited.

Providing a glimpse into a possible elaboration, Olsen (1993) found an erosion of collegiality among faculty members as they progressed from their first to second and third years as academics. One reason for this decline, according to her data, is the pressure of the tenure clock: "If this ethos of competition and 'too little time' continues to erode collegiality, faculty may find themselves in an environment that is very different than the 'community of scholars' many expect when choosing their career" (p. 467). Similarly, a longitudinal study undertaken by Boice (1991) sheds additional light on these issues: His work reveals that new faculty almost always experience feelings of "loneliness and intellectual understimulation" (p. 30) as they struggle to find their appropriate roles in their new environments. This was eased over time, as faculty developed networks and made both social and intellectual connections. Whitt's 1991 qualitative study further emphasizes this need for collegiality and reveals the important role of faculty chairs in fostering this sort of environment.

Taken together, these studies do shed some light on the struggles of faculty members to stay connected to their work. They fall short, however, in that they seem to portray research work as occurring within a virtual vacuum, with few or no power issues at play. This is a dangerous assumption since faculty who choose more "controversial" approaches or topics may also encounter additional obstacles. In fact, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) argue that these faculty members are too often forced either to adopt more mainstream approaches (thereby potentially compromising their own values and beliefs), or to opt out of the current system (leaving the university without the benefit of faculty who offer viewpoints counter to the mainstream). These findings are important in the context of this research, since many "controversial" researchers are highly driven by their passion for their work.

The above-mentioned study not withstanding, most work in the area of faculty development and attitudes either examines professors as a homogenous group or looks at only one variable, such as academic rank or discipline. The research described in this paper seeks to contribute to that void through a careful examination of the ways in which professors of education set their research agendas and struggle to stay connected to them in meaningful ways.

Methodology

It is useful to begin to understand these issues within the context of a comparative case-study research project. As Yin (1984) notes, this methodology assists the investigator in accounting for a phenomenon "within its real-life context," particularly when the boundaries between the two are not clearly defined. This is undoubtedly the case when one considers a university and its environment. To that end, faculty in the education departments at two California Research I universities -- one public and one private -- were interviewed.

For recruitment purposes, all ladder and emeriti faculty members included in lists supplied by each department were initially contacted with a letter describing the study. A follow-up telephone call or e-mail was used to determine each individual's interest in participating and to arrange a time for an interview. A total of 47 faculty members participated in 40- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews. The demographic breakdown of respondents was roughly similar to the overall breakdown of each department, largely due to the good response rates at both schools (58% at the public institution; 44% at the private institution). The most notable exception is found in the small number of female faculty members at the private institution who participated. Table 1 describes the demographics of each department as well as of the final faculty sample.

Table 1
Description of All Ladder Faculty at Each Research Site[1]
(1998-99 Academic Year)

		Public (n=48)	Private (n=40)
Gender:	Male	27 (56%)	30 (75%)
	Female	21 (44%)	10 (25%)
Ethnicity/Race:	Non-White	38 (79%)	32 (80%)
	White	10 (21%)	8 (20%)
Professional Rank:	Associate Professor	31 (65%)	32 (80%)
	Assistant Professor	10 (21%)	3 (8%)
	Full Professor	7 (15%)	5 (13%)

Another important variable that must be considered in this analysis is the length of time that each respondent has been in his or her academic career. The faculty members at the private institution are somewhat older[2] and seniority and professional rank have the potential to contribute to autonomy or minimize constraint. Table 2 illustrates the differences between the two sites on this important issue.

Table 2
Length of Time Since Earning Doctorate and Receiving Tenure

	Public (n=28)	Private (n=19)
Mean Number of Years Since Receiving Doctoral Degree	22.4 years	29.7 years
Mean Number of Years Since Tenure Was Awarded[3]	17.8 years	28.5 years

Consistent with the principles of case study research, the interviews with faculty were semi-structured and free flowing, in order to allow for themes not previously anticipated by the researcher to emerge from the conversations. An interview protocol was used as a guide, however, ensuring that all study participants addressed at least roughly the same issues. This allowed for the interview responses to be compared across sites or tenure status (for example). (Please see Appendix I for a copy of the interview guide.)

In keeping with the grounded theory approach, an iterative process was used for data analysis. In other words, data were continuously reviewed and analyzed throughout the data collection process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Coding categories were not finalized until all interviews were complete, however. Following the interviewing phase, the analysis process consisted of reading and re-reading interview transcripts and observational fieldnotes numerous times to develop a codebook containing analytic categories relevant to the research questions. I then used these categories to code all of the interviews and to sort responses.

Before turning to the results of this study, it is first necessary to outline the theoretical assumptions that have guided both the development and the understanding of the research. The following section addresses those issues.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical framework developed in this paper is an amalgam of several varied yet often overlapping theoretical approaches, driven by the themes that emerged from the data. First, although the focus of the study is individual faculty experiences, these experiences must be

seen within their larger context. As such, this research draws from traditional organizational theory to craft an initial theoretical lens for understanding the implications of global and national trends for universities. In order to discern the experience of individuals, the framework also draws heavily from the work of sociocultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu.

Despite the complexities inherent in defining "the university," some characteristics of universities are clear and distinct. Specifically, as social institutions, universities can easily be characterized as organizations situated in social environments – environments upon which they depend, not only for students and employees, but for resources as well. As such, it is possible to use organizational theory to characterize universities as "open systems" which, while separated from their environments by arbitrary boundaries, must interact with their environments to survive (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

Within open systems theory lies the principle of "loosely coupled" subgroups. The idea of "coupling" refers to the extent to which individuals and groups are interdependent and interact with each other (Lundberg, 1980). According to Weick (1982), within a loosely coupled system, individuals are interdependent (thereby making it a system), but the ties between people are weaker than in other systems (p. 676). More precisely, although the actions of two individuals or groups have a clear connection, each actor still has a distinct identity (Weick, 1976, p. 3).

While the distinct identities of faculty members within universities may be beneficial for professional autonomy, they may also create situations with unequal power and control. In fact, it is not difficult to observe the varying degrees of autonomy that subgroups and individuals within universities have in their choices and actions (Iannello, 1992). Whether this power is related to professional rank, personal identity issues (such as gender, ethnicity, race) or academic department, different individuals and different groups have different levels of power in decision-making and agenda-setting.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is particularly helpful in understanding the role of the individual within the university because his concept of cultural capital "leaves room for individual biographies by taking into consideration variations in how individuals use (it)" (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 163). Bourdieu uses the economic analogy of capital to explain social interactions, arguing that each individual possesses a particular amount (in various forms) which he or she may exchange or rely upon at any given time (Bourdieu, 1983, 1993; Lamont and Lareau, 1988). This theory of capital can be likened to a card game, where each player is in

possession of a hand of cards, some more useful than others. The hand that one is dealt is analogous to the various forms and amounts of capital (Bourdieu, 1976). For the professor, capital takes many forms including academic credentials, publications and presentations, social networks and key contacts, membership in various committees, and professional rank (especially tenure status). Capital is not limited to professional characteristics, however, and personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality all have a part in determining the amount of any one type of capital possessed by an individual.

The way in which an individual is able to play his or her cards – i.e., the dispositions one possesses – is referred to by Bourdieu as "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Harker and May, 1993). It is this set of dispositions which can allow an individual to challenge (or choose to challenge) the constraints he or she may feel; the very ability to question the structure is one aspect of habitus. Likewise, however, it is these dispositions that may also prevent that very questioning, for if this tendency or ability to question is not present, the resistance will not take place.

As will become clear from the discussion below, the habiti and amount of cultural capital possessed by researchers are closely connected to their ability to stay emotionally connected to their work. Greater amounts of capital can be translated into time, autonomy, and freedom to make individual decisions. All of these, in turn, have the potential to protect the very fragile emotional bond between researcher and research. The interview findings, which support these claims, are discussed in the next section.

Research as Lived Experience: The Construction of the Research Agenda

As the interview protocol reveals (see Appendix I), this was not intended to be a study of emotions in academic work. In fact, the research was originally undertaken to reveal the extent to which funding drives research agendas. With an open-ended protocol, however, it was inevitable (intended, in fact) that the issues that were salient to the respondents would emerge. The importance of an emotional connection to the work being done was one of the strongest themes to surface.[4] At the same time, it also became clear that faculty do not enjoy the same degrees of freedom to sustain this connection. In fact, through university processes (particularly promotion and tenure reviews), faculty seem to become distanced from the work that drove them to academic careers in the first place. The motivations to pursue particular lines of inquiry vary

according to the amount of power and autonomy (largely a function of professional rank) possessed by the researcher. This tension is best illustrated through the comments made by the respondents as they discussed what motivates and constrains them in the development of their research agendas.

Motivating Factors

When reflecting on the development of their research agendas, faculty from both universities talked about the importance of the exploration process. More precisely, professors at all levels pointed to the need to be open to various ideas as they set their research agendas. For example, an assistant professor at the private institution noted that "it's probably not very uncommon...for people to kind of switch around and end up doing something they didn't initially intend." Similarly, a full professor at the same school revealed that for him,

> The secret to an interesting scholarship and to staying alive even though you've done it for decades, is to keep an eye out for anomalies. The things you didn't expect. The worst thing I think is to stake out your territory in your thesis and then defend it the rest of your life. It is much more fun to be your own revisionist.

Another professor noted that he has a similar approach. He prefers to "poke around." That poking around, he says, "leads then to a kind of conceptualizing, a kind of focusing, a kind of sense of a project and then it becomes sort of more intense." One professor even noted the importance of his office at another university because it allows him time and mental space to think -- something he does not feel he can do well on campus because of other obligations (such as meetings and students) pulling at his time.

Despite these comments about the importance of keeping an open mind to potential research ideas, most of the faculty interviewed said they have some sort of guiding agenda or purpose when they make decisions about their research. Most often, they spoke of wanting their work to have practical relevance to educators and to society. These comments are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

Relevance

Close to half of the educational researchers in this sample indicated the importance of practical or social relevance in decisions about what they will study. These comments more often came from faculty earlier in their careers, and were roughly split between respondents who

said they hoped their work would have relevance to teachers or policymakers and those who said their work was intended to contribute to social equity or justice. Regardless of their particular foci, the researchers who made comments about the importance of relevance in their research were seemingly unwavering in their commitment to this principle. An assistant professor put it quite simply: "If nothing's going to improve because of the work you do, why do it?" Another assistant professor echoed this sentiment, noting that when she thinks about topics to pursue as a researcher,

> ...the most important thing to me is importance. I'm really concerned if they're going to be important to the teaching community and to the schools. I don't really want to research things that aren't important and accessible to teachers.

Additionally, another professor at the private university told me, "I have a firm and unwavering commitment to issues of social equity and that's at the core of everything I'm doing." Similarly, an associate professor said she believes as researchers "we have a social obligation." She went on to say:

> We don't all have to be activists in the same way, but I do think we have a social responsibility. I mean also we have a moral responsibility, but I also think we have a social responsibility to use what we learn to some immediate or productive end.

An associate professor at the public university traced his commitment to issues of social justice to his high school years, telling me:

> When I graduated from high school in 1968... the civil rights movement was going very strong in the United States, as well as the anti-war movement, so at least those two movements really had an impact on me as a young person. ... So when I thought about doing research and thought about what I was going to do when I got out of college, I always had a sense that I would do something that would be involved in some way, shape or form around social justice.

Indeed, the impact of personal experience was a strong theme as respondents described the development of their research agendas to me. The following section elaborates on this theme.

Personal Experience

As they described the development of their research agendas over time, many of the professors with whom I spoke also relayed stories of their past – experiences that either led them to graduate work and academic careers or guided them toward particular avenues of inquiry in their research. For example, one professor at the private school described his work in New York

City during the community control movement. This experience led him to historical research because as he put it, "I was fascinated. How could this bureaucracy have been created?" Coincidentally, an assistant professor at the other research site also spoke of her work in New York City, noting that after ten years of experience with the city's Board of Education, she left "frustrated that so many kids of color were falling through the cracks and nothing was being done."

But personal experience has not only had an impact on these professors before their academic careers began. Indeed, almost as many spoke of experiences they have had since they joined the academy. For example, one professor has shifted his research from evaluation to work on Downs Syndrome after learning that his own grandchild was born with the condition. And an assistant professor who immigrated to the United States from Latin America talked about the impact that move had on him and his work:

> As I became a member of a minority group in this country - that was something I didn't anticipate ever, because even though I was committed to these issues of social justice...I never thought of myself as a minority person until I came to the U.S. ... So that generated a whole bunch of new experiences for me that really sensitized me to the experience of minority groups.

Clearly this professor has been significantly influenced not only by his own experiences but by the experiences of others as well. Many of the respondents in this study are even more directly impacted, as evidenced by their frequent comments about the importance of peers and colleagues in the creation and development of their research agendas.

Collegial Influence

Moreover, collaboration in academic research can take many forms, ranging from casual conversations with colleagues to investigative partnerships with students. This range was represented in the comments that faculty made during the interviews, as they described the importance of other people on the development of their research agendas.

Almost one fourth of the researchers in this sample mentioned the importance of their colleagues in the formation of their research agendas. Respondents spoke of the importance of conversations with fellow researchers. For example, an assistant professor said, "People influence me even when they're not trying to, by talking about research and commenting and

arguing and criticizing and reacting to things." An associate professor in the same department noted that new research topics can "just sort of pop out of conversations."

A few respondents talked specifically about the importance of their mentors, and the strong influence that they had early on. For instance, an assistant professor at the private institution recalled the advice his mentor offered him as he struggled to refine his interests: "His advice to me was to really dig down, dig deep inside and find out what really, really matters to you ... because that's the source of what's going to sustain you through the process." A professor emeritus at the same school recalled a similar experience, noting that the influence of his mentor was so strong that he had to leave his training university in order to feel he had some autonomy in setting his research agenda. One professor who did her training in her current department commented that, even with tenure, she still feels the need to please her dissertation chair.

Over one fourth of the respondents talked specifically about the importance of their graduate students to their work. Most often, these comments described the satisfaction these professors derive from working with students on research projects. For example, one professor told me that her "major satisfactions from the job come from working with students." Yet another called his work with doctoral students "one of the greatest joys of what I do." A third professor echoed this, saying that "my best source of intellectual support and stimulation was always graduate students." A professor who said she "loves working with graduate students" also commented that her work with her students "shakes my work in certain ways" because they come from a variety of disciplines, none of which are usually the same as her own.

Not surprisingly, all of the comments related to working with students came from associate, full and emeriti professors. Assistant professors, on the other hand, were more inclined to discuss their mentors or other colleagues. This split clearly reflects the different career stages of the respondents in the sample.

Serendipity and Opportunity

One third of the professors who participated in the study mentioned the importance of serendipity in the research projects they have undertaken in the past. These professors were usually approached by colleagues who thought they might be interested in working on a particular project. For example, one professor described some work he did early in his career and said that he became involved when a colleague proposed a research agenda and "I said yes.

Looking back it is hard for me to say exactly why." Another told an amusing story of when he "quite literally stubbed my toe on a box ... and I looked down to curse at it and it turned out to be a box full of history of things (and) here was all this wonderful research done for me. ... So serendipity -- you've got to keep your eyes open for that."

Several faculty members readily described themselves as opportunists. One professor called himself "a lucky person. I rarely had to go after anything consciously. I never planned, as far as I know. Very opportunistic. Take advantage of what comes up." Similarly, a professor emeritus told me,

> I'm an opportunist. Whatever's out there. ... I don't have this burning passion to do something and then I'm going to find the resources to do it. I'd rather see what's already going on and then how do I piggy back that onto something I might be interested in.

It is important to note, however, that even those professors who deemed themselves absolute opportunists also described overarching themes to their research. In other words, they did not simply take any project that came along. Instead, they kept their eyes and ears open for projects that fit within their own basic agenda.

In general, those professors who spoke of serendipity and opportunism were more likely to be later in their careers than those who spoke of social agendas and personal missions. In fact, career stage – specifically, whether the respondent had completed the tenure process yet – proved to be an important factor in the lines of inquiry chosen by faculty members. The tenure process itself is a strong constraint for many faculty. These and other related constraints are discussed in the next section.

Constraints in Agenda-Setting

The faculty members in this sample who had already gone through the tenure process had quite varied experiences to report. Some (mostly older full and emeriti professors) told me that they had an "easy" time. In sharp contrast, however, younger full professors and more recently tenured associate and full professors remembered their experiences less fondly. One professor told me it was "terrifying" to think of not getting tenure. An associate professor recalling her own tenure experience told me that "you're more anxious before tenure. You just don't know what it's going to take. And you're working all the time. And you're just hoping you've chosen an area that's going to be okay and that you're going to make it." These negative perceptions are

important because – as will become evident – they are influential as faculty make decisions about their research.

Processes

For many, there is confusion about what is valued in the tenure process. For instance, a beginning assistant professor at the private university told me that while she hopes to earn tenure and she recognizes that her department has "high expectations" of her, she really is not sure of precisely what is expected. She explained that "Countless times I've said to people 'I don't know if I'm going to get tenure' and they've said 'No, no, you'll be fine, you'll get tenure, of course you'll get tenure.' And I don't really know what you have to do." Similarly, a full professor who counseled assistant professors at the public university while serving in an administrative role told me that those with whom she spoke "had all these crazy ideas in their head" about what was expected of them on the tenure track. And while she acknowledged the frustration that this confusion can cause, she argued that the process is worthwhile if you "know the rules of the game." Knowing the rules of the game comes with its own difficulties, however.

An assistant professor, for instance, described earning tenure as needing to fit "into a perfect mold." Many non-tenured faculty members indicated they believe these expectations will not change until they receive tenure. As one assistant professor explained, she and her colleagues are expected to "jump through particular hoops and prove certain things." In her opinion, this process ultimately robs her of some of her autonomy, as she concerns herself with pleasing colleagues rather than with her own more immediate priorities.

Faculty members in both departments are acutely aware of the importance of research in the tenure review process. Often this means doing research in very particular areas. For example, an assistant professor explained that:

> We know there is a box and we know there are topics outside the box. Places like [this private university] and other large universities, they've become famous for being right on the edge of the box. You don't want to get too far outside the box unless you are comfortably tenured. I think that's obvious.

Similarly, another explained that "it's kind of a dilemma that typically younger faculty members are more likely to want to do something more innovative ... But with the pressure to do certain research or so much research, it's hard to make the time to do that." And an assistant professor

at the public university who had just finished putting together his dossier for tenure review explained how he realized after the fact the ways in which the tenure process affected his work:

> I realize that inadvertently I began to shape some of my work in accordance to some of the expectations that I felt the university had for me. And that was not a conscious decision. It just happened. ... It was probably because I felt that before I can actually get tenure, I need to prove that I can really do stuff ... based on paradigms that are appreciated and valued. And I didn't think about this consciously.

As important as the actual process of research is the product – the published article or book. Untenured faculty members are aware that they must publish certain numbers of articles if they want to be granted tenure. The consequence, unfortunately, is that some lines of inquiry are deemed not researchable by the untenured professor, simply by virtue of the fact that they might be too time consuming or might not yield results quickly enough. What is also clear to faculty members who are working toward tenure is that articles cannot be published in just <u>any</u> journal: Only particular journals are acceptable to each subdiscipline. These issues are particularly important for faculty members of color, many of whom reported that there are journals which deal specifically with ethnic and racial minority issues that are not considered appropriate or worthwhile within their subdisciplines.

Funding

Most respondents who interact with funding agencies said they have specific strategies for acquiring funding even when there is resistance. One professor, for instance, described a proposal he wrote which received positive feedback from raters, although they expressed skepticism that he would be able to get cooperation from respondents. He contacted them and said "'well, I've already begun collecting the data and I have yet to have anybody turn me down.' They said 'the check's in the mail.'" In fact, several professors told me they often submit proposals for work they have already begun, saying the "head start" can offer an advantage in the thoroughness and effectiveness of the proposal.

A more common approach to obtaining funding when a source's needs may not match perfectly with the researcher's – particularly when the researcher does not have the clout to employ the strategies mentioned above – is to adjust the way in which the project is described. One professor, for instance, told me that she tries to put her proposals "in the kind of language that they can tolerate." None of these faculty said that they would abandon their initial avenue of

inquiry, but they were nevertheless willing to incorporate funders' specific interests into their own or alter the structure of the proposal in order to bring it into closer alignment with the thinking of the foundation or agency. By way of illustration, a professor at the public institution told me that the researcher's job is to "persuade (the funder) that this stuff you think you know is really relevant to their problem."

When asked whether a lack of available funds had or ever would deter them from a research project they wanted to pursue, most faculty said no. As one professor put it, "If you have a passion for something, you really can't not do it." There were, however, a few instances of projects that were abandoned because funding was not available. This was largely the exception, though, and the decisions were related to isolated projects and not to entire lines of inquiry.

Interestingly, although no one admitted to personally "following the funding" by pursuing only research projects for which funding was already being offered, several highlighted this practice as something they thought some of their colleagues might do. For example, one professor said he thinks it is

> ...really unfortunate to let funding sources drive your research. Of course, that's inevitable. It's inevitable that people simply say, 'oh, yeah, we could satisfy this funding request, and we can write a proposal for five million dollars and get it funded,'... but I've never done that at all.

While funders have the potential to act as external constraints to academic researchers, the university or department itself may also drive constraints related to funding. More specifically, if faculty feel pressure from colleagues or administration to secure outside funding for their research, then their choices about what to study may be impacted in that way as well. Respondents' thoughts on this particular issue are summarized in the next section.

Pressure to Obtain Funding

A number of faculty, mostly at the private university, mentioned the departmental pressures they feel to secure funding from external sources. Some faculty spoke of a changing institutional culture – one that increasingly values an academic's ability to bring money into the school. For example, one professor accounted the way every faculty meeting at his institution now begins with an announcement of the names of faculty who have been awarded grants and how much money they have brought to the school. He also pointed out that "They never talk

about what the results were or anything, never talk about the substance of it, but they certainly never fail to mention, no matter how small of a sum, what it is." Another described the growing pressure to learn how to "market" and "sell" your research in order to attract external funding. Most of the comments of this sort referred to the changes taking place with regard to these issues. In other words, despite the fact that only a relative few remarked about internal pressures to obtain funds, the issue may be growing in importance and should be carefully watched.

To be sure, the tenure process and funding issues were among the most significant of the constraints that these respondents described to me. But there were other, less tangible factors as well. These additional constraints are described in the section that follows.

Individual and Organizational Constraints

The constraints that compound the pressures of working toward ter re exist for faculty members at all levels, but are felt most acutely by those who are not tenure Specifically, almost half of the respondents – two thirds of the assistant and associate professors – complained of the time pressures they feel and the ways in which those pressures affect their research. One professor lamented that "we're all going to die of overwork," calling time a "major, major issue." An assistant professor partially attributed her lack of time to the "kind of person" she is, and her desire to accomplish everything:

> In my job now I feel like I've got at least six different jobs, and trying to balance those different jobs and different responsibilities for me because it gets very complicated, so whether it's the teaching that I need to do and trying to do a really good job at my teaching at the same time as I'm trying to carry out my research agenda, is difficult.

These researchers described various ways of responding to time constraints, often in relation to the power they feel they have to control their own time. For example, an assistant professor at the private school expressed his frustration that when he was hired, he was given the impression that his teaching load would be light and he would have "oceans of empty time to formulate research proposals. And it hasn't been like that at all." He went on to tell me how he is struggling with just how to organize his time to be able to conduct more research. In contrast, a professor emeritus offered a perspective at the other end of the career ladder, explaining that at a certain point he simply decided he had "served my time. ... I was running between the department of anthropology and the school of education so much to attend [meetings] that I hardly had time to think about anything else. So I just quit."

Also common were remarks about feeling obliged to do or be responsible for particular types of research, either because it was the work the researcher was hired to do, because he or she was the only "resident expert," or because a higher ranking professor or administrator has made a request. Not surprisingly, these comments most often came from assistant and associate professors, and where they did not, they came from full professors who recalled earlier points in their careers.

Beyond problems of time and professional obligation, however, lie more politically charged issues such as resistance to various bodies of research or personal identity factors that compel a researcher toward a particular type or field of research. Over one third of the respondents – in particular, female faculty members, faculty members of color, and those who study students of color – described the resistance they have encountered in their work and the ways in which they have had to combat that often very subtle resistance.

The form that this resistance takes is often difficult to discern. Respondents described their colleagues as "polite" and "civil," noting that "you hardly notice they are being antagonistic." One professor attributed this to the "professional respect" that others have for their colleagues. Nevertheless, these professors told me they realized the effect these quiet pressures could have on their research. As one associate professor put it:

> It's not outright that people will tell you can't do this work here. That rarely happens. ... It's much more subtle. I think what people will tell you is that if you're going to continue this line of research, don't expect to get tenure. If you're going to continue this line of research, don't expect to be promoted to full professor. If you're going to do this type of research, you probably shouldn't be at a place like [this], or what are sort of traditional institutions. You might want to try something else, or some other place. .... And I've been told that in no uncertain terms while I've been here.

Many of the professors who told me that their work is not highly regarded by their colleagues also told me that they, in response, have simply pursued it anyway. This response was understandably more likely to come from associate, full and emeriti professors. As one professor put it, "I'm old enough to kick them around now. They don't bother me." Another referred to himself as "a bad boy around here," but told me simply, "It's who I am. I'm a social critic. That's the way it is."

Several professors told me about the very careful ways in which they present work they consider to be politically charged, such as the respondent who says he works to "figure out ways to say [things] to provoke … without stirring up a hornets' nest." In addition to being generally

younger faculty members, professors who struggle constantly to frame their work in a "more acceptable" way also tend either to be faculty members of color, female faculty members, or faculty members who do work on populations of color. And just as they are vigilantly aware of who they are speaking to when they present their research, they are also painfully aware of who is judging them. As such, many find that in order to carry out the work they have chosen, they must make it "air tight," resistant to criticism or reproach. For some, this simply means making sure that the quality of their work is, in general, superior. Others find the only solution is to do twice as much research as their colleagues. Clearly, whatever the specific approach, these researchers are constrained by what they have determined is a higher standard, brought about by the negative perception of their research areas or their work in general.

Discussion

The passions and personal connections that motivate these educational researchers were unmistakable. This was particularly true for assistant and some associate professors who commonly spoke of their work in almost idealized terms – saying they were committed to social or educational change and would not otherwise be in their current positions. But these strong drives were also tempered by circumstance and process. Specifically, the pressures of working in an organization where individuals are expected to work toward promotion and tenure were as resounding as the personal convictions that were expressed.

The tenure process emerged as the strongest indicator of whether these researchers experienced constraints as they set their research agendas. Pressures to publish quickly, abundantly, and in particular places are compounded by funding needs, a lack of time to do all that is expected, and a sense of obligation to be a "good neighbor" in the department. At the same time, newer faculty are vulnerable to "polite" encouragement (or discouragement, as the case may be), from mentors who may not agree with (or understand) their work.

Speaking in broad terms, assistant and associate professors were more likely to think of their work with passion and resolve. In the big picture, tangible rewards mattered less to them than bringing about change through their research and teaching. In contrast, full and emeriti professors were more often guided by external forces like funding opportunities or the general directions of their fields. This pattern revealed the gradual replacement of emotional connection with more rational, logistical concerns. The question of precisely what leads to this sort of

change naturally emerges. According to these data, the answer lies in the organizational constraints with which educational researchers on the tenure track must contend.

Each new scholar enters an organization or a discipline that has traditions and norms. Even in cases where the scholar may question these accepted attitudes, he or she still perceives a need to work – to some extent – within their limits. For example, non-tenured researchers frequently described the pressures they feel to publish in certain journals and at a certain rate. As such, they must make choices about their work that propel them toward these very particular goals, which may or may not be consistent with their own agendas. Similarly, even those faculty who only feel pressure to obtain funding for their students and not for their own research will inevitably be pulled (however subtly) in the direction of what the funders believe is worthwhile.

Despite the determination and passion that the newer faculty members conveyed, they were nevertheless aware of the difficulties ahead. Many had already begun making decisions about their work based on what they believed would "count" at tenure time. Professors at all levels talked about pressures to find funding, and the ways in which they had construed their work to secure it. Some talked about the isolation they felt, when following their hearts also meant they were making unpopular decisions about the directions of their work. And there was often frustration in their voices when they explained how difficult it was to find time to work with students, even though, for many, that was the source of greatest joy.

Moreover, the amount of cultural capital acquired is not the same for all faculty. Researchers with particular backgrounds or who do particular types of work are especially vulnerable to the types of subtle constraints described here. Faculty of color and faculty who do work outside the mainstream – two characteristics which, in this study at least, often go hand in hand – recognize a need to over-perform and over-compensate, just to be accepted in the academy. Despite what are often very personal and very agenda-driven ideas about what needs to be researched, these professors may not be able to conduct their work freely, without the limits of traditional expectations and paradigms.

These constraints may lessen over time, as a researcher moves up through the ranks, gaining status, prestige and, hopefully, tenure. The progression of an academic career includes the reaping of its benefits as well. The senior academic typically has more power and control over his or her autonomous space, and a greater ability to choose research projects based on interest or importance, rather than on the funding they will generate or the publications to which

they may lead. In the absence of other forms of constraint, this increase in cultural capital can contribute to the creation of greater autonomy for the educational researcher.

What these data reveal, however, is the very complex way in which motivations and constraints interact as new faculty find their place in the academy. As tenure track faculty earn and are awarded more freedom and autonomy, they are also being socialized into their professions and fields. In this process, their strong emotional attachments to their work may be lessened or may disappear altogether. They may be so overwhelmed and distracted by procedural issues that they lose sight of their very personal reasons for pursuing academic careers in the first place. This finding is disturbing because in tempering the passions of younger faculty members, we may also deny ourselves new and different ways of understanding social and educational problems.

Implications of the Research

There are problems in our schools that are so entrenched and so profound, they scream out for new ways of understanding. Researchers with different or novel approaches to conceptualizing and addressing them need to be recognized as competent and as having an important perspective to contribute. Moreover, researchers must be provided the space to sustain their emotional connections to the work they do. These two important conditions are often interdependent and inseparable. To whatever extent faculty with fresh and impassioned ways of thinking can be nurtured and sustained in the academy, their contributions will be increased enormously. One way in which this might be accomplished is through a careful re-examination of the tenure process.

It should not be inferred that the constraints presented by the tenure process are sufficient to argue for the dissolution of the policy itself. Indeed, the researchers with whom I spoke were adamant about the importance of tenure to academic freedom and autonomy. It is certainly reasonable to argue that if researchers are to feel free to pursue any potential topic, that they must not be afraid of losing their jobs. But at the same time, this policy that protects them should not create other constraints. Therefore, the process of tenure – as separate from but integral to the policy of tenure – must be reconsidered in this light.

Internal pressures and constraints like those described here have enormous potential to draw boundaries that faculty –particularly faculty with less power and less cultural capital – may

not feel able to cross. The difference between these limitations and larger-scale political or societal pressures (which are seen as the impetus for the policy of academic freedom in the first place) is that these subtler constraints are accepted or even expected. Many faculty seem to believe that the boundaries created by tradition and history are inevitable. As a result, they do not include them in their ideas about academic freedom and do not challenge their very existence.

But as this research has shown, these limits have implications for the ways in which educational researchers do their work and for the ability they have to stay connected to it. Hence, this study should point toward the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of academic freedom. When the issue is discussed or defended, the conversation should include attention to both the external and internal constraints that faculty face, including the constraints created by the very process of tenure. It is only in this way that truly autonomous spaces for research and teaching can be created.

There are implications for the short term as well. As researchers, it may seem a simple and straightforward task to remember why we do what we have chosen to do. But as actors within a complicated organization – one with processes and procedures as well as pressures and limitations – our task becomes more difficult. We are not completely at the mercy of these pressures, however. As independent actors, we have the ability to create spaces for ourselves that allow for thoughtful, meaningful work to occur. Specifically, if we are to be successful in nurturing the emotional side of our lives as researchers, we must strive for the following:

- Beginning researchers must stay vigilantly aware of the choices they are making about their research. If concessions are made to accommodate procedural or personal pressures, their long-term effects may be lessened if decisions are made consciously.
- As mentors, senior faculty must also remain aware of the advice they offer and the ways in which they influence the decisions that beginning professors make. In instances where the research interests or approaches of mentor and mentee may not be in harmony, courses of action should ultimately be chosen based on scholarly debate characterized by tolerance, respect, and listening.
- In all conversations, we must see each other as whole beings. Our work must continue to be judged based on clear, rational thinking, but we must also take into account the very important emotional side of ourselves as well as others. Emotions must not be dismissed as

pathological (to return to Boler's typology). Instead, we must allow for the political possibilities of emotionally-infused discourse. By embracing rather than denying our emotional selves we have the potential not only to stay connected to our work, but also to bring about much-needed social and educational change at a greater level.

- Deans and department chairs must strive to create departmental environments where qualities such as tolerance, respect, and space for listening are possible. Through strong leadership and carefully thought out policy, these administrators have the potential to foster school cultures where creative thinking and work driven by passion and hope are the norm, rather than the exception.
- Many educational researchers may lose their emotional connections to their work because they are no longer able to spend significant amounts of time in schools. These relationships are critical because, for many, they serve as a reminder of why our work is important in the first place. Yet our current reward structure does not allow for professors at any level to be involved in action research or service-oriented work to any great degree. Pressures to publish and secure external funding take precedence (Zell & Wilms,, 2000). A revised reward structure that takes into account the very vital role of service in our work could remedy this problem.
- We must continue exploring and discussing these issues. Additional research that examines academic careers both qualitatively and longitudinally will help us gain a greater understanding of what causes emotional distancing in academic life and what can help to prevent it. This work must pay careful attention to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and other issues of power (a limitation of this research).

Conclusion

New faculty, coming in with energy and unique ideas, must be encouraged to explore those ideas. They must be provided the space and freedom to investigate the areas that they see as important, necessary, and relevant. If new professors with novel or even revolutionary ideas are prevented from delving into their chosen areas of inquiry, we will deny them their right to the pursuit of knowledge at the time when their passions may be the strongest. If that is their experience in the earliest years of their academic careers, can we reasonably expect them to be

passionate once they are granted the freedom – through tenure – to embrace those passions more fully?

Security in one's job can provide an enormous amount of freedom. But it is clear that many university practices do almost as much to damage academic freedom as they do to protect it. Non-tenured faculty are required to fit innumerable criteria that do not allow them to freely pursue their work. As young scholars, these researchers should be afforded the opportunity to push their field to its very limits. Instead, they are forced to tone down the most radical of their ideas and find ways to communicate that do not offend or contest the status quo. How can we expect to change our society for the better, if all progress must be made within established boundaries and traditional limitations?

Critical educator Paulo Freire (1970) tells us that "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." Walsh (1999) reminds us that as teachers, our enthusiasm for our subject areas is critical to our students if they are to learn and enjoy learning. If this energy is to be sustained, she argues that we must nourish "the inner lives of the professoriate" (p. 22). Similarly, Rendón (2000) admonishes: "We have neglected the 'soul' of research. In doing so, we have equated being humanistic with lowering standards, for humanists are often seen as 'soft' and nonrigorous" (p. 4). Rather than focus on procedure and constraint, we must take care to foster the creative and emotional aspects of our work lives.

This project in which we are all engaged – the pursuit and creation of knowledge – is indeed an ongoing and complex project. It requires patience and strength as well as passion and hope. So many of the educational researchers who shared their experiences with me embodied all of these qualities. But at the same time, they were limited in the extent to which they could utilize them because of constraints that were either not recognized or seemingly beyond their control.

We must be aware of the often subtle ways that faculty are socialized into this profession. As assistant professors are mentored and advised on strategies for successful tenure reviews, they must also have the freedom to think radically, to think differently, to think outside the box. This freedom is instrumental in protecting the often very delicate emotional link that exists between the educational researcher and the topics that he or she studies. This emotional link is what will sustain researchers as they seek to improve our schools and the lives of students within them.

ENDNOTES

[1] These figures do not include emeriti professors because they are not included in the official statistics of either department. They are, however, included in the sample and relevant demographic information is presented below. Emeriti professors were contacted only if they were still active in their departments at the time of the study (i.e., they had offices or, at the very least, telephone numbers or e-mail addresses). A total of five emeriti professors were contacted at the private university (all men), and nine were contacted at the public university (seven men, two women).

[2] Refers to amount of time passed since earning a doctorate and receiving tenure; no data were collected on the actual ages of respondents.

[3] This figure represents the years since receiving tenure for the first time. Several respondents at the private university had been awarded tenure more than once as a result of switching institutions.

[4] . It is these reflections that are the focus of this paper. For a more detailed discussion of the overall findings, see McClafferty 1999 and McClafferty 2000.

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APPENDIX I:
FACULTY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background

1. How would you describe your research? Probe specifically for: general topic; qualitative/quantitative; source(s) of funding; source(s) of data; intended beneficiaries.
   How did you select your research agenda?
   Does your general topic have personal significance to you?

Personal Experiences with Constraint and Resistance

2. How much autonomy do you feel you have in selecting the topics you research?
   Have you felt any pressure to move your research in one direction or another? Where have those pressures come from? Do you feel that this autonomy has changed for you in the last several years? Is this the amount of autonomy you expected to have before you began your career?
3. What, if anything, constrains you from doing your work?
4. ***If not already addressed:*** Are there any more personal/individual issues or factors which you believe have influenced the direction of your research? What aspects of your personal identity or what affiliations or political commitments do you believe have an impact? Probe for gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, professional rank, etc.
5. ***If not already addressed:*** How closely does your current research agenda resemble the research you expected/planned to do when you began your career?
   If different: What caused that change? How do you feel about that change?
   If similar: Has it been difficult at all to maintain the same direction?
6. How do you make decisions about what your research will address? What factors do you keep in mind when making these decisions? If not raised already, ask specifically about attention to funders' needs/desires, administrative goals, etc.

Changes in the University/Environment

7. What changes -- if any -- have you seen in recent years, vis-à-vis your department? What changes have you seen in the university as a whole? Probe for: Changes in Priorities, Funding, Staffing, Goals.

The University in Society

8. What do you believe the priorities of the university (as a whole) should be at this moment?
9. How well do you think your department is living up to what you just described?
10. ***If not already addressed***: What do you perceive as the social obligation of the university? Do you think this sense of obligation is changing? How? Why? (Or why not?) How do you see your work fitting into this obligation?
11. Is the obligation different for public and private universities?

Academic Freedom

12. How do you define academic freedom?
13. Have you ever had an instance where you felt your academic freedom was threatened?
14. Do you think tenure is necessary in order to ensure academic freedom?
15. Is there anything else that we haven't already discussed that you think comes into play when you make decisions about your research agenda?